



The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter
1st Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division (M)
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Hello from the land of rising temperatures! Yes, it is finally starting to get much warmer here in Iraq. This week we'll hear about Soldiers in the Outkast Platoon – SGT Robles and PFC Phillips and the Renegade Armorers – CPL Weymeyer and PFC Ravari. No matter the mission, whether on the FOB or not, the Soldiers are making contributions to the bigger mission. We appreciate and applaud all their work and dedication.



Above: Phoenix Soldiers conducting final inspection with the US Army Corps of Engineers at a new medical clinic in Hussieniya, Iraq.

PHOENIX PROJECTS

Over the past 2 weeks, the Phoenix Battalion continued the transition into its new role as the project managers for the Raider Brigade. Probably the greatest payback of this challenging new job is the ability to see firsthand the positive influence our Soldiers and projects have on the common Iraqi civilian. As of late, we

have witnessed the completed refurbishment of 2 schools and celebrated the successful transition into the new Al Zahour IP Stations, all in Hussieniya. Also in Hussieniya, a grand opening was conducted for a Co-Op that provided tractors, feed, fertilizer, and other farm necessities for over 200 farmers and increased the productivity of over 79,000 acres of farmland. In other area projects, generator fuel delivery programs were initiated and already have had an impact by supplying local residents with clean water, 24 hours a day. These are just a few of the great projects being planned everyday in the Raider area of operations. We look forward to sharing even more successes in the next FRG Letter.

Project Manager PAO – LT Jordan Maxcey

SOLDIER SPOTLIGHTS FROM THE “OUTKAST” PLATOON...



Above: SGT Carlos Robles preparing for a mission.

The first is Sergeant Carlos Robles, a truck commander in the

platoon. SGT Robles is one of the newest members of the Outkast platoon. He in-processed to the STB weeks before deployment, and has jumped right in – becoming one of the people I can count on to always be ready at anytime, for any mission that gets thrown our way. In my absence he is always ready to take charge and ensure that everything gets done. He is easy to talk to and someone the Soldiers have been able to rely on to help them out whenever necessary. He is truly a take charge type NCO and we're proud to have him as a part of the platoon and the battalion.



Above: PFC Christopher Phillips manning his weapon on the humvee.

PFC Christopher “Red” Phillips, is the gunner and sometimes the driver of my vehicle. One thing funny we know about PFC Phillips is that he has a hard time waking up, thus we allow him two minutes of wake-up time before anyone will talk or mess with him. It is fun and entertaining anytime he gets up. With him as my gunner, I never worry that someone isn't watching my back and securing my movement when I dismount; I feel safe knowing that he is up there. PFC Phillips can also be counted on to try and make the best of every situation by making us all laugh. He has the unbelievable ability to even get the civilian population in the villages we go through to laugh and smile. He's another one of the Outkast's

Infantrymen – trained and proficient in all those specific infantry tasks. He's a great part of the platoon – red hair and all. I'm proud to call him my Soldier any day.

Outkast 6 – LT Melissa Cozart

WISE WANDERINGS...BY SERGEANT MAJOR SEAMAN

In my wanderings, ramblings, patrolling and visiting with Soldiers - like any Battalion Sergeant Major, I do a lot of talking with our Soldiers. I thought I'd share with you some of their observations in reference to being deployed to Iraq and Camp Taji in general. These observations are from all ranks and in no particular order.

Common noises you hear. 4-42
Field Artillery Battalion firing illumination rounds at various hours of the night but usually when you just fell asleep. The tactical unmanned aerial vehicle revs its engine at a screaming pitch somewhere between 0200 and 0500 at night. The camp never really sleeps all at one time; there are always shift changes, patrols coming and going...so you hear Soldiers walking and talking at all hours, sometimes very loudly. Helicopters landing and taking off at all hours, but especially at night...the Chinooks are the loudest, by the way. During the day you always hear gunfire around the camp gates, nothing to worry about, it's the Iraqi guards, they always fire their weapons in the air, must be a tradition or something? Then there is the – becoming famous – loud speaker system used to make announcements in the camp.



Above: CSM Seaman and CPT Powell meeting with a local Sheik.

It's loud and usually starts with "Attention <long pause> Camp <long pause> Taji <long pause>". There is a road outside the camp close to where we work so you always here car horns. Soldiers are taking care of themselves; they are doing physical training, setting goals to lose weight, watching what they eat, using the gyms and running. They work out at all hours of the day and night, it just depends on when their shift gets over with. The gyms stay open for 24 hours. The Dining Facility serves a meal at 2300 hours in the night. Comradeship is alive and well. Everyone drinks and has plenty of bottled water. Sunscreen and chap-stick are in abundant supply and readily available. None of the Soldiers I've spoken to are in need of anything. There are always things they want or extras, but overall, we have what we need. The supply Soldiers in the battalion have pushed themselves very hard to order, get, pickup or bring with them everything that Soldiers need. CPT Rasmussen, SFC Beauchamp, PFC Rivera, SSG Shafer, PFC Muniz, PFC Aponte, SGT Herring, SSG Crittenden, PVT Mormon are all heroes as far as I'm concerned. They have done a fine job taking care of Soldier of the Phoenix Battalion and are great Americans. I would be remised if I didn't mention SSG

Owen. SSG Owen is running the Battalion S4 warehouse; he is also directly responsible for getting the thousands of bottles of water used by Soldiers everyday.

SOLDIER SPOTLIGHTS FROM THE "RENEGADES"

There's one thing every Soldier in the Renegade Company has in common with the others – we all carry a weapon (except the Chaplain, of course). Day and night, there are two people who make sure all of the company's weapons are maintained and accounted for. Corporal Wehmeyer and Private First Class Ravari, my fearless armorers, are those men. They are responsible for all rifles, machine guns, pistols, night vision equipment, and a myriad of other gadgets and gizmos that make our life easier.



Above: CPL Weymeyer and PFC Ravari in the Arms room.

If you were to walk into the Renegade Command Post almost any time of day, you'll find one of these two men hard at work in the arms room. From routine accountability to machine gun repair, they're always working on something. It's no small task keeping over 300 weapons and sensitive items in working order.

In addition to their duties in the arms room, Corporal Wehmeyer and Private First Class Ravari play a pivotal role in the daily running of the Renegade Command Post. Both of them serve as members of the vehicle crews for the Company Commander and the First Sergeant. They also take turns running radio watch, working the mailroom, and being all-around go-to guys for Top and I.

Renegade 6 – CPT Ed Cox

PHOENIX RE-ENLISTMENTS

There have been quite a few reenlistments in the Battalion since the start of the deployment in December. On behalf of the entire Phoenix Family we extend our appreciation and sincere thanks for the continued support of your deployed Soldiers, and their decision to continue serving in the United States Army. There are many reasons to continue your service in the Army; while bonus money and guaranteed assignments make it easier to stay in, most of the Soldiers that have reenlisted did so to continue serving our country in these difficult times.

April provided our Soldiers with the option to reenlist for another duty station. Some of the places Soldiers have been asking to go are Fort Bragg, Fort Sam Houston and to stay at Fort Hood. We have also had several requests to go to over seas, not to mention some Soldiers have asked to reclassify their MOS's. We had a big mission this year with having 70 Total Reenlistments to do. I am happy to report that the first week of April the Phoenix Battalion already has 45 re-enlistments, so we are over half way there. We would like to say congratulations to this week's reenlistments: SGT Butler from Bravo Company and PFC Swafford from HHC.

Re-enlistment NCO – SGT James Real



Above: SGT Butler reenlisting for 6 more years.

EAGLES SUPPORTING THE BRIGADE

In continuous effort and support of the United States' ongoing mission of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Bravo Company has been entrusted to support the high profile mission of Operation Tigris Waves. Operation Tigris Waves is a joint effort to support local nationals to help enhance their quality of life.

In this effort Bravo Company's primary role is to establish communications for the 1-66 Armored Battalion's area of operation. Among the Signal equipment provided by Bravo Company is the Command Post Node. This state of the art equipment enhances 1-66 Armor's ability to communicate throughout the battlefield during Operation Tigris Waves. The Command Post Node provides the most advanced means of voice and data technology available.

The Command Post Node provided by Bravo Company allows 1-66

Armor a full spectrum of communication ability. Its primary function is to connect a forward element to the greater Signal Network. Its presence on the battlefield allows commanders both voice and data communications. It provides phone capability for secure command and control communications. It also provides a non-secured capability for functions such as morale calls and e-mail. The Command Post Node, along with other vital Signal elements allows the 1-66 Armor Battalion a robust assortment of communications methods.



Above: SPC Garcia putting up the Line of Sight antenna

Bravo Company Soldiers are continually performing above and beyond the call of duty. The morale is high and the Soldiers of Bravo are always ready to embark on new and upcoming missions. Officers, NCOs and Soldiers are continually leading the company to success.

PHOENIX 6

Hello from Camp Taji! The battalion is in full cycle now with mid tour leave; about 22% of the battalion is on or has taken leave as of this writing. The company commanders and 1SGs closely monitor and work daily to manage the soldier leaves to ensure everyone is afforded the

opportunity. We also have the ability to send soldiers to a 4 day “fighter pass” location in Qatar or to Baghdad and have several who have taken advantage of this time off so far. I would like to say thanks for the great support from CPT Miller and the Family Support Group at our Rear Detachment at FT Hood. They are truly doing an outstanding job and resolving many complex problems so that we can focus on operations here in Iraq. Staying behind is tough (and not always glamorous) business. We are very thankful over here for the hard work that our Rear D. and Family Support Group does to make our mission in Iraq a success. Thank You!



To Dare Is To Do

Larry A. Seaman
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army

John W. Cross
LTC, EN
Commanding



Above: Phoenix and Iraqi Army Soldiers have dinner at a local sheik's house celebrating the opening of a farmer's Co-Op north of Baghdad.